Inquest into the death of William Chase Corben

William Chase Corben, aged four years, drowned in his neighbours’ swimming pool on 28 February 2015. William was able to access the pool as the pool gate was intentionally propped open with a block of wood.

Deputy State Coroner John Lock delivered his findings of inquest on 7 April 2016.

The Queensland Government responds to recommendations directed to government agencies at inquests by informing the community if a recommendation will be implemented or the reason why a recommendation is not supported.

Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible agency named in the response.

**Recommendation 1**

The issue of creating a new offence where serious injury or death occurs in circumstances where there have been intentional or negligent breaches of pool safety laws be reconsidered by the responsible state government minister, in the context of the facts arising from these cases as well as the support for the implementation of such additional offences by other coronial jurisdictions.

Response and action: implementation of the recommendation is under consideration.

Responsible agency: Department of Housing and Public Works.

On 25 July 2016 the Minister for Housing and Public Works responded:

The department is reviewing the recommendation and expects to provide a detailed response later in 2016.

**Recommendation 2**

The Queensland Police Service review their Operational procedures manual Chapter 8.5.11 regarding the investigation of swimming pool deaths to ensure all possible aspects of swimming pool compliance and safety are included in the investigation.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Queensland Police Service.

On 12 July 2016 the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services responded:

Amendments to *Operational procedures manual* (OPM) section 8.5.11 ‘Drownings occurring in swimming pools’ have been made to include the following additional information (highlighted):

When a death occurs as a result of drowning in a swimming pool, the investigating officer should ascertain as much of the following information as is possible and include same on the relevant part of the Form 1: ‘Police report of death to a coroner’:

(i) whether the pool is in ground or above ground;
(ii) whether fencing around the pool, distinct from fencing around the boundary of the property, exists;

(iii) description of existing pool fencing, including height of the fence, construction materials and method of construction and compliance with legislation;

(iv) the presence or otherwise of pool gates, including detailed description of their operation, additional access areas and if any non-compliant modifications have been made;

(v) details as to why the pool fencing did not prevent the drowning.

The amendments were approved by the deputy commissioner, Strategy, Policy and Performance and published in the Service Manuals Update – OPM amendment issue no. 50 on 29 January 2016.